



COLLABORATIONS



March/April 1999

The Newsletter for California's Community-Focused Court Planning and Court Community Outreach Initiatives

Vol. 1, Issue 2

"A new era of collaboration between county courts, the Judicial Council, and California's communities will lead to a renewal of public trust and confidence in the administration of justice and the primacy of the rule of law in California."

—Chief Justice Ronald M. George

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County Spotlight Los Angeles, Placer, and El Dorado Counties Push Local Planning to Front Burner

Los Angeles County Meets a Formidable Challenge

The Los Angeles trial courts' community-focused court planning team, headed by **John A. Clarke**, Executive Officer of Los Angeles Superior Court and the Administratively Unified Courts, faces the challenge of fashioning a plan that links the largest trial court system in the world to its community. To this end, the team began organizing for its work even before the May 1998 Statewide Conference — although Mr. Clarke is quick to point out that "community-focused planning is an extension of the work this court began in 1995."

To facilitate the important work of the planning team and provide its members with a better understanding of court and community issues, Los Angeles County developed its innovative *Courts in Touch (CIT)* program. By pairing team members with superior and municipal court judges in a courtroom setting, the program aims to give the community representative and judicial officer opportunities to discuss key issues. The over-arching idea of CIT is to promote

dialogue that leads to a shared perspective and a better understanding of priority planning areas. Judges participating in CIT include **Hon. Michael K. Kellogg**, **Hon. Francis A. Gateley Jr.**, **Hon. Paul Gutman**, and **Hon. Lawrence W. Crispo**.

Community team participants include **Dr. Geraldine Washington**, **Winston Smith**, **Barbara Hope** and **Jim Leahy**.

As part of its planning initiative, Los Angeles County has held stakeholder meetings at three sites in the county, conducted in-depth interviews about the court, established three ongoing court improvement task forces, conducted a Field Institute public opinion poll, and administered a survey to 4,000 randomly selected members of the court community. In addition, **Tim Adams**, Senior Court Manager with the Los Angeles Superior Court and the Administratively Unified Courts, reports that five public meetings held in conjunction with county supervisors were well received. Nearly 3,500 invitations were sent to citizens throughout the county inviting them to attend and to comment on the draft

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AOC Moves to Civic Center Offices

New Address:
Administrative Office of the Courts
455 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94102-3660

Main telephone: 415.865.4200

**Council and Legal Services Division,
Research & Planning Unit**
Shelley M. Stump: 415.865.7453
Katy Locker: 415.865.7658
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**Visit the California Court
And Community Collaboration
Web site:**
[www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/
community](http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/community)

**County Strategic Planning
Dates to Remember:**
**June 15, 1999: Draft Plan
Due at AOC**
**December 15, 1999: Final
Draft Plan due at AOC**

(Los Angeles County, continued) strategic plan.

As a result of these efforts, the Los Angeles team has identified eleven planning goals: *Jury Reform, Resource Management, Case and Calendar Management, Evaluation of the Court's Governance Structure, Appropriate Technology, Education and Training for the Judiciary and Staff, Uniform Rules and Procedures, Independence and Accountability, Accessibility to the Public, Interaction with Other Judicial Agencies, and Public Confidence in the Court.*

Each of these goals carries a number of key results areas; some of these areas identified for the goal of *Jury Reform* include:

- ◆ *Expediting jury trials* by limiting last-minute motions, counseling jurors about on call times, time qualifying jurors in assembly rooms, etc.;
- ◆ *Increasing participation in the jury system* by guaranteeing a one to two year exemption from jury duty for those who serve, re-summoning no-show jurors every 30 days and disciplining them, verifying medical excuses, by moving to countywide "one-day-one-trial"); and
- ◆ *Increasing the dignity of jury service* by providing a 4:00 p.m. release time, shifting counsel tables to face jury instead of judge during trial, allowing double tax credit for employers who pay for juror service, etc.

The team's efforts have been publicized on National Public

Los Angeles trial courts announces community outreach
Web site:
www.lacourtsoutreach.co.la.ca.us/
e-mail: laoutrch@co.la.ca.us

Radio and on its community-focused planning Web site, www.lacourtsoutreach.co.la.ca.us/.

Team leader **John Clarke** offers, "We believe that this project [community-focused court planning] should not be considered a single-focus project, but one that complements and builds on existing strategic planning and community outreach."



In Placer County, Meeting Rural Needs Drives Improved Justice Initiative

As **Hon. Alan V. Pineschi**, planning team leader, points out, "Placer is still a relatively rural county in many ways." Thus, the team's approach to community-focused planning has employed planning procedures appropriate to the needs of the community's rural population.

The team began its efforts by preparing a matrix of proposed projects and timelines for completion. Proposed projects included:

- ◆ Finding new outreach/education opportunities with the school system;
- ◆ Addressing the county's need for staff to perform justice of the peace wedding ceremonies on Saturdays (the clerk's office has had to refer the public out of state on Saturdays);
- ◆ Providing mediators for small claims cases;
- ◆ Developing customer service questionnaires to monitor the quality of court services;
- ◆ Establishing flexible hours for the clerk's office and night court hours to improve access to those

who work or live in outlying areas not convenient to their assigned court locations;

- ◆ Improving court technology, including the establishment or expansion of video arraignment procedures, computer access at the district attorney's office, and traffic citation kiosk pay centers;
- ◆ Establishing self-help centers for pro per litigants;
- ◆ Establishing a children's waiting room; and
- ◆ Improving and expanding training and education of court staff.

The team developed a list of desired outcomes for each of these areas. For example, under the banner of *school system outreach/education*, the team included:

- ◆ Student tours of Placer County's historic courthouse (conducted by volunteer docents);
- ◆ Student observation of actual trials and student participation in mock trials; and
- ◆ Presentations to school groups about the job duties of court staff.

In order to solicit public input, the results of the team's efforts will be posted on the court Web site (www.placer.ca.gov/courts) in the near future. Several items have already been publicized in the local press.



El Dorado Surveys Public Opinion in Planning Process

The community-focused court planning team of El Dorado County, under the leadership of Superior Court Executive Officer, **Alexander B. Aikman**, has devoted much

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(*El Dorado County continued*) of its time since last May's statewide conference toward targeting items to be addressed in its plan. After much deliberation, the team settled on four key areas — *technology, facilities, families, and community outreach*. For each of these, a list of possible court projects was developed. Within the area of *families*, some of the projects set forth for community consideration were:

- ◆ The development of a help center for self-represented individuals to be staffed by court staff, community volunteers, and attorneys;
- ◆ The employment of a community services coordinator to track, evaluate, and assess the quality of community and social programs used by the court;
- ◆ The establishment of a multifaceted "rewards" program sponsored by local businesses for youths who have successfully participated in Juvenile Drug Court programs;
- ◆ The adoption and adequate staffing of settlement, negotiation, and mediation programs as the preferred processes for resolving family law cases; and
- ◆ The establishment of a single court file—for most family law proceedings and in those cases for which multiple files are maintained—connecting files electronically.

To enable the community to voice its opinion on projects identified in key areas, the team next developed a ranking exercise that was distributed to members of the court's **Citizens' Council for Service Excellence**, members of the bar, criminal justice agencies,

agencies and groups serving the county's Juvenile Justice Planning Commission, court staff, and county service clubs. Those surveyed were asked to rank each project in terms of its importance and difficulty of implementation, and to award an overall ranking. The results of these surveys have been very useful to the planning team.

Mr. Aikman reports that, following the judges' approval of a draft plan in March, the planning team will hold community meetings in Placerville and in South Lake Tahoe to solicit additional public comment.

Final Report and Handbook of the Court Community Outreach Task Force Approved by Judicial Council

On February 9, 1999, the Judicial Council approved the work of the Court Community Outreach Task Force, chaired by **Hon. Veronica S. McBeth**. The council unanimously approved the task force's recommendations to:

- ◆ Adopt a new standard and three rule amendments;
- ◆ Authorize distribution of the court community outreach handbook;
- ◆ Charge the Community-Focused Court Planning Implementation Committee with continuing court and community collaboration efforts; and
- ◆ Establish court and community collaboration as a high priority of the council and the AOC.

New section 39 of the California Standards of Judicial Administration urges the judiciary to provide active leadership in (a) identifying and resolving issues of access to

justice, (b) developing local education programs, (c) creating ways to hear from members, (d) being available to speak with community groups, and (e) taking an active part in the life of the community. Rules 205, 207, and 532.5 of the California Rules of Court were amended to require presiding judges and court executive officers to recognize and encourage judicial involvement in court and community outreach activities as they do other official judicial functions and to account for judicial time involved in those activities. The new standard and the rule amendments take effect on April 1, 1999.

The task force's handbook, *Dialogue: Courts Reaching Out to Their Communities* is a resource created to assist courts in developing and enhancing court and community collaboration efforts. *Dialogue* includes an extensive ethics analysis, a discussion of community justice initiatives, and practical tools, samples, and resources to help courts immediately take action in public outreach efforts.

The AOC will distribute *Dialogue* to court executive officers in late April. Soon thereafter, *Dialogue* will also be available on the California Court and Community Collaboration Web site (www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/community).

Downloadable Web site Resources Available:

- ◆ **Final Report of the Special Task Force on Court/Community Outreach:** www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/outreach/report.htm
- ◆ **Team Planning Resources:** www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/community/planning/phase2_resources.htm

**Judicial Council Approves
Trial Court Improvement
Funds for In-Court
Planning Consultants
County Team Grant
Guidelines & Applications
Mailed March 12, 1999**

At its March 10th meeting, the Judicial Council approved the allocation of Trial Court Improvement Fund money to be used by county planning teams for contracting with strategic planning consultants.

To facilitate the disbursement of allocated funds, notice of the availability of AOC's block grant guidelines and application has been forwarded to all county planning team leaders, presiding judges, and court executive officers.

Successful applicants will receive up to \$10,000 for services from consultants on the approved list. These

funds can be used to cover future planning consultant expenses or expenses already incurred for this purpose since the May 1998 statewide planning conference.

Full details about the block grants are available in the grant package. For additional information, please telephone Shelley M. Stump (415.865.7453) or Katy Locker (415.865.7658).

**County Planning Team
Workshops,
*Renewing the
Momentum*,
Set for June 1999**

The *Community-Focused Court Planning Implementation Committee*, chaired by **Hon. Judith McConnell** and **Hon. Veronica S. McBeth**, has selected tentative dates for two

planning team workshops to be attended by two to three members of each county's planning team.

The committee will sponsor *Renewing the Momentum* workshops on the following dates:

- ◆ For small counties: June 3 and 4, 1999
- ◆ For medium/large counties: June 17 and 18, 1999

A full program featuring guest facilitator **Dr. R. Dale Lefever**, and opportunities for team sharing, is being planned. Locations are to be announced.

County planning team members are encouraged to save these dates on their calendars. Full details will be announced shortly.

**Contributions for
Collaborations? Contact Jack
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